

THE PLATFORM

an anarchist affinity publication

**SILENT NO LONGER:
CONFRONTING SEXUAL
VIOLENCE IN THE LEFT**

**BLOOD MONEY FOR ART:
TRANSFIELD AND THE SYDNEY
BIENNALE**

**GLOBAL FIRE — AN INTERVIEW
WITH MICHAEL SCHMIDT**



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Thank you: Cara, Aran, Michael, Lucy, Lorcan, Ben, Tom, Kieran
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"The impotence of the anarchists ... in particular depends on the lack of a practical programme that could be implemented in the short term."

- Errico Malatesta, 1924

2014 heralds new attacks on the conditions of the working class and what little gains have been wrought from capitalism in Australia over the past hundred years. Abbott is gearing up, 2013 was the prelude, the real horror awaits us in 2014's planned austerity budget.

In this issue we touch on some of the battle grounds. Brutal attacks on refugees conceal real attacks on the conditions of the working class. Access to healthcare is in the firing line as increased 'copayments' move the cost of healthcare to those who can least afford it whilst private health insurers reap billions in government hand-outs. New police powers brought in under the cover of conservative moral panics in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria give the state increased scope to choke resistance from our social movements.

This is the first issue of a new publication from Anarchist Affinity. We take Malatesta's criticism seriously. As anarchists we need to do more than recount tales of past glories. This new quarterly publication is a small step towards advancing an anarchist understanding of the situation that confronts us here and now.

We write from an explicitly revolutionary anarchist viewpoint, but we want to do more than just talk to the small groups of self identified anarchists that already exist in Australia today. Right now attacks on the working class are expanding, sexism rears its ugly head, the ecological crisis demands action, and what passes for social democracy offers no real alternative. If anarchism is going to play any part in building a movement against these systems of oppression, anarchists **MUST** engage in the concrete discussions which Malatesta called for in 1924.

Anarchist Affinity

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ATTACKS ON MEDICARE AND HEALTH INEQUALITY

By Kieran Bennett

The Abbott government is busy laying the groundwork for a massive attack on the conditions of the working class in April's federal budget. In charge of preparing the ground is Abbott's hand-picked Commission of Audit. In the line of fire: Medicare and your right to access a GP. The plan: Rob \$750 million from Australia's poorest whilst giving \$5.9 billion dollars to private health insurers.

The Commission of Audit

The Commission of Audit is an assortment of business lobbyists and Liberal party mates. The Commission is headed by Tony Sheppard, president of the Business Council of Australia (BCA) and (until October) chairman of Transfield services. As head of the BCA he argues for lower taxes, abolition of the fair work act, and various attacks on the social wage. As chairman of Transfield Services, he profited from mining, coal, and up to \$180 million in government contracts for the operation of refugee prisons in Narau.

Commission member Peter Boxall is a former Chief of Staff to Peter Costello, who spent time working for the IMF during the "structural adjustments" of the 1980s, and played a key role in implementing John Howard's "Work Choices".

Amanda Vanstone joins this disreputable bunch bringing her experience as a Howard government minister responsible for attacks on the unemployed, students, and pensioners, the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ending any semblance of self-determination, as flawed as that body was) and of course, the imprisonment of many thousands of refugees.

What's in a co-payment?

The first shot across the bow aimed in the new attack on Medicare was fired by former Abbott advisor Terry Barnes of the Australian Council of Health Research (ACHR). The ACHR is a "think tank" funded by Australian Unity, a health insurer with a lot to gain from

any attack on Medicare. Barnes published a paper to coincide with the election of the Abbott government which called for the private health insurers dream - compulsory upfront fees for Australians utilising Medicare.

Barnes wants a six dollar Medicare "co-payment". His argument is that poor Australians go to the GP too often, and that an additional six dollar upfront fee would send a "price signal" that would harmlessly discourage over use of GPs. Barnes claims that his proposal would save the Medicare budget \$750 million over four years.

But a six dollar GP tax is not the only health copayment that Australians are already slugged with. Australians already pay "out of pocket" for a raft of health care services. There is no dental care coverage under Medicare leaving most Australians unable to see a dentist unless they can pay upfront. There a significant "gaps" between the cost of services and what is covered by Medicare, and access to medical specialists routinely involves significant upfront expense for Australians on Medicare.

The effect of all of this is frightening. Copayments fund 17% of health care in Australia. One in six dollars of health care expenditure in Australia is not covered by any insurance, public or private, and is instead forked out directly by those who can afford it least. In the United States, so often denounced for its backward and regressive healthcare system, copayments only account for 13% of health expenditure.

And the Liberal government is gear-

ing up to whack another six dollar charge on top of this. Far from sending a harmless "price signal", a six dollar copayment is a brutal measure that would reduce access to GPs by those who need them most, and already use them least.

Under Utilisation

The idea that Australia's poorest over use GP services is both obnoxious and untrue. Terry Barnes is on the record as saying that a six dollar upfront payment would not stop anyone who is truly sick from attending a GP, as this only represents the price of "two cups of coffee". Anyone who thinks six dollars is nothing has never attempted to live on the minimum wage, let alone the dole, family payments or a pension, in Australia.

Australian workers already make choices between rent, food and health care on a weekly basis. Cost already dissuades Australia's poorest from accessing medical services when they need it.

Current research on working class Australian's use of health care already shows that "poorer people are already under-utilising healthcare, and their rate of under-utilisation corresponds to their level of illness". Mapping health care use against average income in Australia already shows that people living in Australia's poorest neighbourhoods are "three times more likely to delay medical consultations than those living in the wealthiest suburbs".

The highest use of GP services in Australia, and the highest concentrations of GPs, are not where people are poorest, or where people are sickest (which coincidentally is where people are poorest), but rather where people are wealthiest. The richest use GP services the most, there are more GPs in wealthier suburbs, and Australia's wealthiest are less likely to fall ill and die young.

Being poor and working class, attempting to live on a shitty wage or poverty level pension, is a major health hazard in Australia. The wealthiest 20% of Australians live an average six years longer than those of us surviving in the ranks of the poorest 20%.

Health Cash for big business

We're told that Medicare costs too much. A six dollar copayment, effectively a tax levied disproportionately on Australia's poorest and sickest, might save the health budget \$750 million over four years. But there is one area of health spending bloat that the Abbott government will never touch. This year alone the government will spend \$5.4 billion subsidising private health insurance.

The private health insurance rebate is an enormous transfer of wealth from tax payers to private, profit oriented health insurers, such as the one funding Terry Barnes' sick attack on what remains of universal healthcare in Australia.

The private health insurance rebate was meant to make private health in-

surance more affordable by keeping premiums low. Introduced in 1999, this massive payment to health insurers has occurred at the same time that average health insurance premiums have risen 130%. Average prices (inflation) in the same period have only risen 50%.

The justification for this massive rort was that subsidising private health insurance would save money in the long run by reducing costs to Medicare. The most recent analysis shows that this \$5.4 billion subsidy does little to shift costs from Medicare, and its abolition would save the government at least \$3 billion a year.

Conclusions

The class self-interest of the government's health policy is blatant: Tax the poor, throw money at the rich. The so-called Commission of Audit is stacked with the same big business cronies and Liberal mates who have always attacked the conditions of working class Australians, and now they are coming for what remains of Australia's public health system. If the health budget is unsustainable, and the poorest really do have to be sluggish with an additional six dollar GP tax, it is only because the government continues to throw bucket loads of money at private health insurers. The truth is that private health insurers want Medicare dismantled, so that more Australians are forced into their health insurance rackets, paying ever greater premiums for a diminishing health service.

THE EXPERIENCE OF TAMIL REFUGEES: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE TAMIL REFUGEE COUNCIL

Content Warning: Genocide, sexual violence, suicide, reproductive coercion.



Aran Mylvaganam is a member of the Tamil Refugee Council. The Tamil Refugee Council was formed in 2011 to give a voice to Tamil refugees seeking asylum in Australia and has since played a key role in organising protests against mandatory detention and in supporting refugees living in Australia. Anarchist Affinity caught up with Aran to talk about his views on the Australian state's immigration policies and the contemporary refugee movement.

The Australian government insists it is safe for Tamils living in Sri Lanka today. What is real situation facing Tamils in Sri Lanka?

In 2009 thousands of Tamils were killed by the Sri Lankan government and army. According to a recent report by the United Nations up to 70,000 Tamils were killed and it may be higher.

According to Bishop Rayappu Joseph over 146,000 Tamils remain unaccounted for. Since 2009, the Sri Lankan government has been very busy suppressing the survivors, destroying evidence of genocide, and arresting anyone who may have been a witness to the crimes. Thousands of Tamil youth have been imprisoned under suspicion of having links to the Tamil Tigers. Hundreds of Tamil women face sexual assault by the army present in the North East of Sri Lanka. For every five Tamils there is an army man present in the North East of Sri Lanka. That is a very heavy military presence.

One example of the continuing genocide was seen in August last year when Tamil women from three villages in Kilinochchi were taken by government officials who said their children needed to receive vaccinations. Instead, the women were coerced into having

surgery to insert long-term hormonal birth control implants. They were told they would be denied access to medical treatment if they did not accept the surgery. The Sri Lankan government is trying to change the demography of Tamil areas, they're trying to suppress the Tamil community, and they're trying to Sinhalise the Tamil areas. They are trying to complete the genocide of the Tamil people and the Australian government is helping them.

And the Australian state has been providing active support to the Sri Lankan state, hasn't it? For instance, the Abbott government donated two Navy ships to the Sri Lankan government late last year.

That's right. The Australian government has been completely on-side with the Sri Lankan government's genocidal agenda since 2006. In 2006 three Tamil men were arrested by the Australian Federal Police on suspicion of having links to the Tamil Tigers. The police went into 300 houses and asked people why they had given money to the Tamil Tigers. They tried to silence the Tamil community from 2006-2009. While the court case was going on from 2006-2009, that was when thousands of Tamils were killed by the Sri Lankan army. The relationship is there. We know that the Australian Federal Police, ASIO and the government were with the Sri Lankan government aiding them. The Australian government continues to aid the Sri Lankan government in many ways.

What has been the experience of Tamil refugees seeking asylum in Australia?

Significant numbers of Tamil refugees started fleeing Sri Lanka after the killings in May 2009. The Australian

government has tried to stop any Tamil refugees who fled Sri Lanka from speaking out against the Sri Lankan government. 42 Tamils refugees, as well as three other Burmese Rohingya men and a Kuwaiti man were declared to be security threats to Australia by ASIO. These are innocent Tamil women, men and children. They have been detained for the last four and a half years. They are being tortured by the Australian government. Their crime was to speak out against the injustices of the Sri Lankan government. That's the whole idea behind refugees having their security clearances rejected by ASIO. It's nothing to do with stopping the boats. It's about stopping Tamils from speaking out. It's about creating that fear within the Tamil community. It's about silencing the Tamil diaspora. They've used ASIO rejection as a means to do that.

Tamil refugees who come to Australia were the first group to face so-called 'enhanced screening processes'. What this means is that you're given 15 minutes to prove that you're a genuine refugee seeking asylum. If you don't do that then you're in trouble. You get deported back straight away. They don't even process your case. Through that process over 2000 refugees so far have been deported back to Sri Lanka. Tamil men and women and children flee the Sri Lankan government, they come here, and the Australian government gives them 15 minutes and deports them back.

This is the experience of the refugees.

What do you think has been missing from the refugee movement in Australia? What could the refugee movement be doing that it hasn't to date?

Broader representation has been missing in the refugee movement. It's all the left groups talking to each other, talking to the converted, about the plight of the refugees. I do believe that we haven't tapped into the broader community in terms of raising awareness about refugees. I think there is really good regional area representation nowadays, which is a good thing. But we do need to tap into broader range of people, rather than just having rallies amongst left groups. Also, if you look at certain rallies relating to climate change or the Perth rallies against the culling of sharks you have thousands of people turning up to rallies organised at the last minute. These are people who are genuinely concerned about human rights and environmental rights. Why aren't these people turning out to rallies in support of refugees? There's something that we're doing wrong. I don't know what that is. We need to look at how we can attract all these people as well so that we can build a movement that will put pressure on this government to bring the cruel treatment of these refugees to an end.

Have refugees been left out of the "refugee movement" in Australia?

I don't think refugees have been left out of the refugee movement in Australia, but I do think that more could be done to put refugees at the front of the refugee movement, rather than just having odd speakers at rallies. There needs to be more involvement from refugee groups like the Tamil Refugee Council and RISE (Refugees, Survivors and Ex-Detainees) to help build this movement, rather than just socialist groups. It's important that we have refugee groups, people from refugee backgrounds, and people who've

been in detention centres having a say about how we should build this movement.

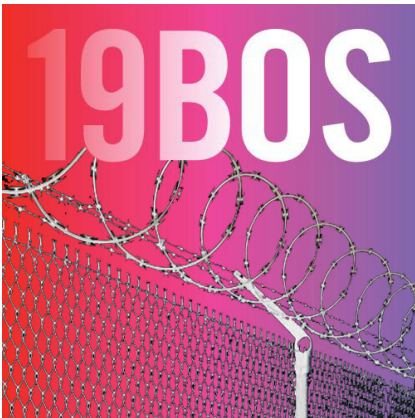
How is the Tamil Refugee Council responding to the situation facing Tamil refugees in Australia?

The Tamil Refugee Council does a lot of work with refugees. We've been doing some welfare work for the last 18 months. I remember in June last year I went to this house where some of the refugee boys were sitting on the chairs, and didn't want to go to sleep, because the floor was too cold to sleep on. I went to another house in April last year to visit a group of refugees living in Mill Park. They were out on bridging visas and didn't know where the shops were. They were given a packet of biscuits by the Red Cross and they ate only that for 24 hours. We try to identify these people and get out to them as soon as they're out into the community. We try to stop deportations whenever they are about to take place. Every time the Australian government mistreats refugees we react to that. Every time they do the wrong thing it's important that it gets highlighted. And we've been doing that consistently for the last 18 months.

I wish we could have done more to stop the deportations of thousands of refugees. I wish we could have stopped the suicide of Shooty, the Tamil boy who was indefinitely detained in Villawood detention centre due to ASIO, who killed himself two years ago. I wish we could have freed the 46 ASIO refugees currently still in detention. There are so many failures from our end in the sense that we haven't had the power to overcome this government.

BLOOD MONEY FOR ART: TRANSFIELD AND THE SYDNEY BIENNALE

By Kieran Bennett



Transfield Services has hit pay dirt. Indefinite detention is big business and the contracts are flowing in. Transfield has already made a whopping \$215 million in just twelve months, building the fences and erecting the tents. They employ the guards that keep hundreds of vulnerable refugees detained in the tropical heat of Nauru's former phosphate mine.

Meanwhile, Transfield's Nauruan employees are paid a pitiful \$4 an hour.

And the contracts keep coming. For the first time one company will be responsible for providing the guards who do the beatings, and the social workers who mop up afterwards. The Salvation Army has lost its contract to run welfare services on Nauru, and Transfield is set to replace them. This 'proud' Sydney company is now positioned to run every aspect of an immigration detention service - everything from the substandard accommodation to the substandard food and the incompetent unmotivated 'welfare' staff can all be yours, direct from Transfield Services!

But it's all for a good cause, as the torture of refugees funds art and culture enriches the lives of Sydney's richest! Transfield Services is enmeshed in the Sydney arts scene almost as heavily as it's

enmeshed in destroying the lives of people fleeing persecution.

Since its establishment in 1973, the Biennale of Sydney has become the most prestigious visual arts event on the Australian calendar. It's internationally prominent amongst the two hundred such events held annually, and is perhaps comparable in scope and influence to the oldest arts biennale, that in Venice. And it's brought to you by Transfield.

Transfield founder Franco Belgiorno-Nettis is also Biennale of Sydney founder Franco Belgiorno-Nettis. For 41 years the Biennale of Sydney has been the centrepiece of Transfield's arts empire. Transfield Holdings operates an "art rental program" leasing out works from its expensive private collection. The Transfield Foundation (a joint venture of Transfield Services and Transfield Holdings!) pours money into the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and coincidentally, the Chairman of the Australia Chamber Orchestra is one Guido Belgiorno-Nettis, Executive Director of Transfield Holdings.

Art is a big deal for this company. It's not just culture wash (although its value as culture-wash is extensive). Art, for Transfield, is about status, prestige and legitimacy. It is no coincidence that the venues

for Biennale events include the private residences of Transfield directors and executives.

It is for these reasons that a Sydney Arts educator, Matthew Kiem, has published a call for a boycott of the Biennale of Sydney. If art means as much to Transfield as its entanglements suggest, an arts boycott of this company could at least inconvenience those involved in the corporate facilitation of human misery. At the very least, a public boycott of the Biennale of Sydney could undermine some of the culture-wash that Transfield deploys to pretty up its image while it works on the destruction of human lives.

It is interesting to note just how defensive the Biennale of Sydney have been to criticism of Transfield Services. On their official twitter account the Biennale organisers wrote:

"RE: comments on BOS sponsors: BOS brings attn 2 the ideas & issues of our times – objectors only deny the legitimate voice of BOS artists"

The irony could not be more obvious if it were deliberately constructed.

SILENT NO LONGER: CONFRONTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE LEFT

By Rebecca Winter



<http://seesuzsketch.blogspot.com>

Content Warning: Experiences of sexual violence and victim blaming.

In 2012, a member of the UK Socialist Workers Party (SWP) came forward saying she had been raped and sexually harassed by the former National Secretary of the organisation, Martin Smith. The internal 'investigation' which followed demonstrated a number of common ways in which sexual violence is ignored and those who experience it are demonised. Some of the members of the Disputes Committee chosen to investigate the claim were close friends of Smith. The woman who had come forward was questioned about her sexual history and

alcohol use. She was made to feel that members of the Disputes Committee thought she was "a slut who asked for it". The Disputes Committee concluded that the accusation that Smith had raped and harassed her was "not proven." Four members of the SWP who discussed their misgivings about the Committee's decision on Facebook were expelled from the group. The woman who had accused Smith was not allowed to attend the SWP's conference to contest the Disputes Committee's decision. The SWP's response to this case resulted in hundreds of

members resigning. Meanwhile, Solidarity (an Australian affiliate of the SWP) labelled the SWP's investigation of the rape claim "scrupulously fair".

While there was a significant outcry amongst people in left-wing circles about the way members of the SWP responded to sexual violence within their group, there was little reflection on the fact that many other left-wing organisations respond in a similarly toxic way. The lack of internal democracy within the SWP certainly hindered the efforts of those seeking change within the organisation, but informal social processes influenced by misogynist ideas about sexual violence can be just as destructive to the lives of sexual violence survivors.

Gendered violence is a key way in which women's oppression is maintained in our patriarchal society. In Australia, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 20 men over the age of 15 have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 years. Violence perpetrated by men is the leading cause of preventable death, disability and illness in women aged 15-44. Aboriginal women, poor women, women of differing abilities, and sex and gender diverse people are significantly more likely to experience sexual violence.

All too often, survivors of sexual violence are greeted with disbelief, anger, and defensiveness when they should be believed and supported. This happens in left-wing groups, our social movements, our friendship circles, our workplaces, and countless other places in society. While most left-wing groups and movements share a stated opposition to sexism,

this does not make them immune to the misogynist assumptions which underlie victim blaming and which often come up when people are confronted by sexual violence committed by their friends or political comrades.

I was raped by someone who was involved in the Melbourne anarchist milieu in 2010. It was a horrible, frightening experience, made worse by the fact that it was someone who I had trusted as a friend and a political comrade. I was lucky, though. The friends, family members and people in the anarchist milieu I told about my experience believed me and the person who assaulted me is no longer welcome in many of Melbourne's political spaces. I know too many people who have had similar experiences, but who have been called liars, ignored, lost friends and comrades, or been forced to remain silent. I can't imagine how much harder it is for people who've survived sexual violence, and then been treated like this by those they thought they could trust, to keep on going.

When someone tells their friends or political comrades that they have experienced sexual violence, there are a number of common responses. Sometimes survivors who come forward are completely ignored. People who know the person who perpetrated sexual violence will say that they 'don't want to take sides' and want to remain 'neutral.' Survivors are told that confronting a perpetrator of sexual violence will cause division in the movement or organisation. The personalities, political beliefs, lifestyles and appearance of survivors of sexual violence are scrutinised in minute

“WE NEED TO MAKE A POLITICAL CHOICE TO BELIEVE SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE”

detail. Survivors of sexual violence are called ‘crazy’ or seen as too emotional. If a survivor speaks out about violence they will often be presented as vindictively trying to wreck a perpetrator’s reputation. Perpetrators are frequently defended as being a ‘good person’ or a ‘good organiser’, as though this should excuse their violence. People attempt to justify their inaction by saying that they don’t want to act based on ‘rumours’ and that we should presume that a person accused of perpetrating sexual violence is ‘innocent until proven guilty.’ Some activists tell survivors not to go to the police, because of their role in supporting state oppression, but all too often provide no alternative forms of support.

These attitudes are used to justify a status quo within the left and within broader society in which the interests of those who perpetrate sexual violence are prioritised over those who are survivors of sexual violence. Part of the problem with many responses to sexual violence is that we have absorbed various legalistic ideas from state criminal ‘justice’ systems which are sexist and are used to justify legal inaction. For instance, the idea that we shouldn’t rush to judge a person accused of committing violence and

should instead presume that they are innocent. This flawed idea is used by many to argue that we should not take the word of survivors when they tell us they have experienced sexual violence. However, as Lisbeth Latham comments in a recent piece on the SWP, “If we think of the refrain ‘people accused of rape are innocent until proven guilty’ then the opposing logic also at play is that those making allegations of rape ‘are guilty of lying about the allegation until proven innocent.’ Defendants and their supporters (both legal and extra-legal) focus their energy not on proving innocence, but on undermining the credibility of the survivor.” We need to reject the state’s narrative about how we should deal with accusations of sexual violence.

It is crucially important for us to point out that when we perpetuate these ideas about sexual violence we are making a *political choice* which has disastrous consequences for survivors of sexual violence. We know that false accusations of sexual violence are incredibly rare. We know that forcing survivors to jump through endless hoops by demanding they provide ‘proof’ before we listen to and believe them is incredibly harmful and makes it extremely difficult

for them to speak out about sexual violence. We know that our continual inaction allows perpetrators to continue abusing people within our communities with impunity. And we know that how we respond to sexual violence currently is killing our political organisations and movements, and frustrating their capacity to challenge sexism, racism, capitalism, and other forms of oppression and exploitation.

So, here’s what I think needs to happen: We need to make a political choice to believe survivors of violence. We need to bring gendered violence out into the open by treating survivors with trust and compassion, rather than hostility. We need to take people at their word when they tell us that they have experienced violence, including gendered and sexual violence, without requiring them to tell us about every little detail of what happened. And more than this, we need to make a choice to prioritise survivors in our political work. This means that we should have survivor-centred responses to sexual violence – where the needs and desires of survivors determine our response. We need to be open to excluding people responsible for sexual violence, at the discretion of the survivor, from our political spaces, or-

ganisations, and movements. And we need to be prepared to support survivors in engaging with the people who harmed them through accountability processes, if that is what they’d like to do. Most of all, though, we need to make it a political priority to actively support sexual violence survivors through all of the personal and political challenges that come in the aftermath of being assaulted.

Asking a perpetrator to leave an organisation or political space on the word of a survivor is often a point which divides people within the left. We have to remember that people are not entitled to be involved in our political spaces. Many of us would accept the need to reject an active Liberal Party member who wanted to join a radical political group based on their oppressive ideology. We need to be open to taking the same approach to those whose actions are a form of violent oppression. In my experience, knowing that I am unlikely to run into the person who raped me at a political space has made a world of difference to my ongoing recovery, especially in environments where I know I would be supported by those around me if I did see him. Asking someone to leave our spaces does not deny them their freedom or safety. But if we refuse to

“FOR TOO LONG SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED AT THE ALTAR OF ‘MOVEMENT BUILDING’”

ask perpetrators to leave our spaces we are effectively risking the safety of survivors and forcing many survivors to self-exclude. Moreover, as women are a significant majority of sexual violence survivors, not dealing with sexual violence has the effect of reinforcing women's oppression.

Gendered violence does not occur in a social vacuum - any response we make within our organisations and movements will be limited in scope. We will never be truly safe or free from violence while we live in a society fundamentally shaped by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Excluding perpetrators from our spaces can enable survivors to feel relatively safe in our movements, but it doesn't prevent sexual violence from being committed in the first place or in other areas of society. To create a society in which sexual violence is no longer a tool of misogynist and racist oppression we need structural systemic change – in short, a revolution.

An essential part of fighting rape culture involves identifying these structural systems of oppression and exploitation which allow people to perpetrate sexual violence with impunity. We need to fight the dominant ideologies which suggest that some people deserve to be victims of violence, and bear responsibility for the harm that is done to them - whether because of their clothes, race, gender

identity; or because they are a refugee, poor, in prison, or a sex worker.

Yet it is not enough to merely struggle against sexism and sexual violence at a structural or ideological level. If we are ever going to build the collective power required to challenge these systems of oppression we must make a committed effort to challenge violence and other actions which reinforce oppression within our political organisations, our social movements, our friendship groups and all other areas of life.

Why would anyone believe talk of a post-revolutionary society without sexism if we cannot support survivors of sexual violence in our midst and take a stand against those who perpetrate gendered violence among us?

There are tentative signs of a growing movement against sexual violence on the left. In 2004, three women were raped at a large punk festival in Philadelphia in the US. The concert organisers established two collectives to support the survivors and hold the rapists to account. The collectives became Philly's Pissed and Philly Stands Up which continued this work for a period of six years. Organisers of the 2012 Toronto and New York Anarchist bookfairs asked people who had been accused of sexual violence, and who were not actively engaging in some sort of accountability process, to not attend the events. Closer to home,

groups like A World Without Sexual Assault and Stepping Up in Melbourne have provided support to survivors, facilitated accountability processes, and run awareness-raising workshops.

We need to continue to build on these political gains in our organising in Melbourne. One new project that that I am excited about aims to bring together collective wisdom about how organisations can respond to sexual violence in a way which genuinely supports survivors. This website resource will also gather together ideas about how tools like grievance collectives can be used to confront other oppressive behaviour, such as racist or sexist conduct. We will be inviting anarchist, socialist, social justice, environmental and other activist groups to commit to acting in accordance with this advice. As part of this commitment, groups will need to run workshops where their members can discuss practical ways they can avoid perpetuating destructive responses to sexual violence and avoid reinforcing systemic oppression. (If you're interested in getting involved in this project, contact Anarchist Affinity and we'll pass your details on to the organising collective).

Conclusion

For too long sexual violence survivors have been sacrificed at the altar of 'movement building.' This approach has a massively destructive impact on survivors, but it also prevents us from creating the kind of movements that we need. We must create social movements which build the revolutionary collective power of the working classes to confront all systems of oppression and exploitation. But to do this we need to start practicing what we preach. We need to challenge misogynist attitudes about sexual violence within our midst and create enduring structures which allow us to support survivors and hold perpetrators to account. Only then can we genuinely claim to be fighting for anarchism and social justice.

Resources

- Lisbeth Latham, 'SWP Rape Allegations and Lessons for the Left' (<http://revitalisinglabour.blogspot.com.au/2014/01/swp-rape-allegations-and-lessons-for.html>)
- Em BC, 'Misogyny on the Left' (<http://bccwords.blogspot.com.au/2012/12/16/misogyny-and-left-we-need-to-start.html>).
- References can be found online.

IN SUMMARY: AGAINST NAPTHINE'S SUMMARY LAWS

By Lorcan



In December 2013 the Victorian Liberal party introduced new legislation to Parliament with the aim of 'updating' the State's Summary Offences legislation (in place since 1966). Under the new laws the police and 'Protective Service Officers' (PSOs) would have the power not just to 'move on' individuals, as they do presently, but entire groups of people. Attorney-General Robert Clarke has made it abundantly clear in a recent press release that these new measures are aimed squarely at limiting the power of unions and activists to organise, stating that "Union friendly restrictions on the use of move-on powers by police at unlawful pickets and blockades, which were introduced by the

former Labor government, will not apply in these circumstances".

In addition to removing laws that protect protestors from move-on orders the government plans to introduce "exclusion orders". Exclusion orders, if introduced, will give police the power to ban individuals from an area for up to twelve months. The reason Clarke gives for this is that police need to "tackle serial law-breakers intent on causing trouble for hard-working Victorians and their businesses". The penalty for infringing one of these orders is (up to) 2 years imprisonment. To put that in perspective, the maximum penalty in Victoria for 'Common Assault', is just 3 months imprisonment. Breaking an exclusion order is to be considered

eight times as serious an offence as assault according to the new laws.

The Victorian government's 'move-on' powers have to be understood as part of a wider attack on union organising and workers' rights in Australia. Over the past thirty years the ability of workers to take effective industrial action has been repeatedly attacked by the state. At present, in the aftermath of WorkChoices and the Fair Work Act, strike action is only legal where it is wholly ineffective. Unions face prohibitive fines for supporting 'unlawful' industrial action and union officials are easily banned from worksites under threat of long prison sentences.

One response to this limitation on the rights of the working class to organise in defence of their interests has been the use of 'community pickets'. At the Baiada chicken processing plant in Laverton in 2011, a community picket was instrumental in closing the work-site and making the workers' strike action effective. At the Queensland Children's Hospital construction site in 2012, a nine week community protest was a key component of a campaign to secure an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement that ensured all workers on site were entitled to the same pay and conditions. The power of a 'community picket' in these instances was the ability to bypass bans on and the timidity of mainstream unions. For capital, this kind of effective industrial action is an affront that was meant to have been quashed through federal government anti-union laws.

This attack on the rights and freedoms of the working class goes beyond the workplace and beyond Victoria. Confected moral panic about 'drunken violence' and 'bikie crime' in New South Wales and Queensland provide the justification for ever greater police powers, ready to be wielded against unions, minority groups and the working class in general.

The ability to obstruct business as usual is the key weapon of workers and community members defending rights and conditions at work and in wider society. New 'move on' powers exist to protect 'business as usual' at all costs. Traditionally 'move on' powers were justified as giving the police the ability to deal with a violent or disruptive individual in an apolitical setting. Laws that enable the police to 'move on' entire groups of people are quashing what little avenues of workers' power that remain in our society.

In the long run our strategy in defeating these laws must be to confront them, break them, and render them a dead letter. In times past union organising was a criminal act – pioneering unionists were exiled to Australia for associating to create a workers' 'combination'. Workers organised, defied the laws, and secured those rights to industrial action that are now under such vicious attack. We must remember that the state and capital never concede 'rights' willingly – the only genuine rights we have are those we seize and defend.

GLOBAL FIRE

SOUTH AFRICAN AUTHOR MICHAEL SCHMIDT ON THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM



Michael Schmidt is an investigative journalist, an anarchist theorist and a radical historian based in Johannesburg, South Africa. He has been an active participant in the international anarchist milieu, including the Zabala-za Anarchist Communist Front (<http://zabalaza.net/>). His major works include 'Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism' (2013, AK Press) and, with Lucien van der Walt, 'Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism' (2009, AK Press). He sits on the council of the Institute for Anarchist Theory and History, Brazil.

*In your recent book, **Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism** (AK Press, USA, 2013), you argue that anarchists have often failed to draw insights from anarchist movements outside of Western Europe. What lessons does the global history of anarchism have to offer those engaged in struggle today?*

The historical record shows that anarchism's primary mass-organisational strategy, syndicalism, is a remarkably coherent and universalist set of theories and practices, despite the movement's grappling with a diverse set of circumstances. From the establishment of the first non-white unions in South Africa and the first unions in China, through to the resistance to fascism in Europe and Latin America - the establishment of practical anarchist control of cities and regions, sometimes ephemeral, sometimes longer lived in countries as diverse as Macedonia (1903), Mexico (1911, 1915), Italy (1914, 1920), Portugal (1918), Brazil (1918), Argentina (1919, 1922), arguably Nicaragua (1927-1932), Ukraine (1917-1921), Manchuria (1929-1931), Paraguay (1931), and Spain (1873/4, 1909, 1917, 1932/3, and 1936-1939).

The results of the historically-revealed universalism are vitally important to any holistic understanding of

anarchism/syndicalism:

Firstly, that the movement arose in the trade unions of the First International, simultaneously in Mexico, Spain, Uruguay, and Egypt from 1868-1872 (in other words, it arose internationally, on four continents, and was explicitly not the imposition of a European ideology);

Secondly, there is no such thing within the movement as "Third World," "Global Southern" or "Non-Western" anarchism, that is in any core sense distinct from that in the "Global North". Rather that they are all of a feather; the movement was infinitely more dominant in most of Latin America than in most of Europe. The "Northern" movement today is often more similar in strength to the historical movements in Vietnam, Lebanon, India, Mozambique, Nigeria, Costa Rica, and Panama in the interwar period - so to look to these movements as the "centre" of the ideology produces gross distortions.

The lessons for anarchists and syndicalists from "the Rest" for "the West" can actually be summed up by saying that the movement always was and remains coherent because of its engagements with the abuse of power at all levels.

How is anarchism still relevant in the world today? What do anarchist ideas about strategy and tactics have to offer people active in social movements today?

I'd say there are several ways in which anarchism is relevant today:

1) It provides the most comprehensive intersectoral critique of not just capital and the state; but all forms of domination and exploitation relating to class, gender, race, colour, ethnicity, creed, ability, sexuality and so forth, implacably confronting grand public enemies such as war-mongering imperialism and intimate ones such as patriarchy. It is not the only ideology to do this, but is certainly the main consistently freethinking socialist approach to such matters.

2) With 15 decades of militant action behind it, it provides a toolkit of tried-and proven tactics for resistance in the direst of circumstances, and, has often risen above those circumstances to decentralise power to the people. These tactics include oppressed class self-management, direct

“IT IS THE QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT COMPELS US TO NAIL OUR COLOURS TO THE MAST”

democracy, equality, mutual aid, and a range of methods based in the conception that the means we use to resist determine the nature of our outcomes. The global anti-capitalist movement of today is heavily indebted to anarchist ethics and tactics for its internal democracy, flexibility, and its humanity.

3) Strategically, we see these tactics as rooted in direct democracy, equality, and horizontal confederalism (today called the “network of networks”), in particular in the submission of specific (self-constituted) anarchist organisations to the oversight of their communities, which then engage in collective decision-making that is consultative and responsible to those communities. It was the local District Committees, Cultural Centres, Consumer Co-operatives, Modern Schools, and Prisoner-support Groups during the Spanish Revolution that linked the great CNT union confederation and its Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) allies to the communities they worked within: the militia that fought on the frontlines against fascism, and the unions that produced all social wealth

would have been rudderless and anchorless without this crucial social layer to give them grounding and direction. In order to have a social revolution of human scale, we submit our actions to the real live humans of the society that we work within: this is our vision of “socialism”.

In sum, anarchism’s “leaderless resistance” is about the ideas and practices that offer communities tools for achieving their freedom, and not about dominating that resistance. Anarchists ideally are fighting for a free world, not an anarchist world, one in which even conservatives will be freed of their statist, capitalist and social bondage to discover new ways of living in community with the rest of us.

Is it important to advance anarchism explicitly? Or is it enough to engage in social movements whose objectives we support without adopting the anarchist label?

This is primarily a tactical question, because the approaches adopted by anarchists have to be suited to the objective conditions of the oppressed classes in the area in which they are active, and the specific local

cultures, histories, even prejudices of those they work alongside. The proper meaning of “anarchist” as a democratic practice – a practical, not utopian, one at that – of the oppressed classes clearly needs to be rehabilitated in Australia and New Zealand. Just as the Bulgarian syndicalists who built unions in the rural areas relied upon ancient peasant traditions of mutual aid to locate syndicalist mutual aid within an approachable framework, so you too must find a good match for anarchism within your cultures. We, for example, have relied heavily on traditional township forms of resistance to explain solidarity, mutual aid, egalitarianism, and self-management. Yet, it is also a strategic question because in my opinion, where you have the bourgeois-democratic freedoms to organise openly and without severe repression, it is important to form an explicitly anarchist organisation in order to act as:

a) a pole around which libertarian socialists, broadly speaking, can orbit and to which they can gravitate organisationally – though it is important to recognise that there can be more than one such pole; and

b) as a lodestar of clear, directly-democratic practice, offering those who seek guidance a vibrant toolkit of time-tested practices with which to defend the autonomy of the oppressed classes from those who would exploit/oppress them.

It is the question of responsibility that compels us to nail our colours to the mast. This is for three reasons:

a) firstly, because we are not terrorists or criminals and we have nothing to be ashamed about that requires hiding, even from our enemies (we should be able to openly defend our democratic credentials before mainstream politicians);

b) secondly, that by forming a formal organisation, people we interact with are made aware that none of us are loose cannons but are subject to the mandates of our organisation (with those mandates being public, fair and explicit); and

c) lastly, but most importantly, that the communities we work within, whether territorial (townships, cities, etc), or communities

of interest (unions, gay rights bodies, residents' associations etc) know that we are responsible to them, that our actions, positions and strategies are consultative, collaborative, responsive and responsible to those they may most immediately affect.

We've been eagerly awaiting the release of Counter Power Volume 2, Global Fire: 150 Fighting Years of Revolutionary Anarchism, is there any news on when it will be released? What ground will you be covering that people might not expect?

Global Fire is really a monstrous work: in research and writing for close to 15 years now, it's really an international organised labour history over 150 years, tracing the organisational and ideological lineages of anarchism/syndicalism in all parts of the world.

We have a lot to get right: we need to have a theory, at least, for why the French syndicalist movement turned reformist during World War I, or why the German revolutionary movement as a whole, both Marxist and anarchist, collapsed over 1919-1923, paving the way for the Nazis.

These are issues of intense argument among historians, and we have to be able to back up with sound argument our stance in every case, from the well-known, like the Palmer Raids against the IWW in the USA in the wake of World War I, to the fate of syndicalism in Southern Rhodesia in the 1950s, or of the near-seizure of power in Chile by the syndicalists in 1956, and their fate under the red regimes in Cuba, Bulgaria and China, or the white regimes in Chile, South Korea, or Argentina. We need to understand the vectors of the anarchist idea in a holistic, transnational sense, but have often been hampered by the narrowness of national(ist) perspectives. Even within the Anarchist movement, histories have been more anecdotal and partisan than truly balanced and rigorous assessments, and have often been very disarticulated by language differences.

With lengthy delays incurred by us trying to make sure that *Global Fire* is the best (in fact only) holistic international account of the movement. You can be assured that Lucien is working on refining the text, which if published in its current format would weigh in at a whopping 1,000 pages, and that we have a pencilled-in release date for 2015, though perhaps 2016 is more realisable.



ANARCHIST AFFINITY'S STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The following points of agreement are neither complete nor final. They represent, at best, where our group was at the time they were adopted.

1. As anarchists we fight to create a self-managed, socialist and stateless society, in which all contribute freely according to ability, and through which all have full access to the material basis for pursuing their individual and collective fulfilment. In this libertarian socialist society, individual freedom is harmonised with communal obligations through cooperation, directly democratic decision making and social and economic equality. We believe such a society is both desirable and possible, and we actively work toward overcoming the hierarchies, exploitation and systems of oppression that stand in its way.

2. To confront oppression in all its forms, the self-organised activity of all persons experiencing oppression is necessary. Systems of oppression manifest both as structures in the economic system and in the ideology of the dominant culture. Within

the dominant culture of our society, intertwined oppressive systems include (but are not limited to) sexism, racism, queerphobia, transphobia and ableism. These oppressive systems, whilst occurring within the context of capitalism and shaped to serve its purpose, are not reducible to capitalism. Unless we actively struggle against all oppressive power systems, these hierarchies will be reproduced both within our own organisations and in any post-capitalist society. We see fighting against these forms of oppression as just as important to the creation of an anarchist society as fighting capitalism and the state. Only by working to eliminate oppressive power relations within the working classes will we be able to create a revolutionary movement capable of genuinely transforming society.

3. Australian capitalism is founded on an act of genocide – the murder and

dispossession of this continent's indigenous people. Capitalism on this continent was built on the seizure and exploitation of indigenous land, and continued attacks on indigenous communities are perpetrated by Australian capitalism and its racist state in the pursuit of what lands and resources that remain. We unequivocally support the ongoing struggle for indigenous self-determination in Australia, and recognise that indigenous sovereignty over the Australian landmass was never ceded.

4. Capitalism is a social system based on the private ownership of the means of production (land, factories, workplaces, machinery and access to raw materials). A tiny minority own the means of production and profit from the productive labour of the working class. The working class consists of all whose access to the means of existence requires that they place their ability to labour at the service of capital. This includes all who labour for a wage, all who are presently unemployed, and all who labour in the reproduction of the working class (domestic labour). Workers are paid the minimum the capitalist can get away with in a given situation, and the capitalist steals the rest. The private property owned by capitalists is the wealth stolen from past generations of workers. Capitalism denies the vast majority their economic and social inheritance through recourse to violence and coercion. Any incursion into private property is punished by the state. This system, capitalism, the state and the oppressive ideologies that support it, must be abolished in their entirety.

5. The state is a centralised structure in which a small number of people, through their control of the police, military and courts (a monopoly on 'legitimate' violence), impose decisions on the vast majority. The state is not simply a "body of armed men" in service of the dominant class, it is also an institution that develops its own interest and that seeks to perpetuate its existence and expand its power. As anarchists we wholly reject the state, and instead we aim for "the most complete realisation of democracy—democracy in the fields, factories, and neighbourhoods."

6. Capitalism reaches across the entire globe. Military and economic imperialism (so-called globalisation) continue to subordinate most of the globe to the capitalist system, securing access to resources, labour and markets for the capitalist core. As capitalism is global, the struggle against capitalism must also be global, and we must act in solidarity and support for the struggles of oppressed people wherever they occur.

7. Capitalism has wrought upon our planet a global ecological crisis that now threatens the basis of existence for the majority of humanity. Capitalist entities grow or perish, whenever capital is not growing it is in crisis. Capitalism, as the effective cause the present environmental crisis, cannot effectively solve or even lessen the extent of environmental degradation. Capitalism's demand for continued growth on our finite planet is at odds with human survival as a species, and therefore as a matter of necessity, and not just desirability, it must be abolished.

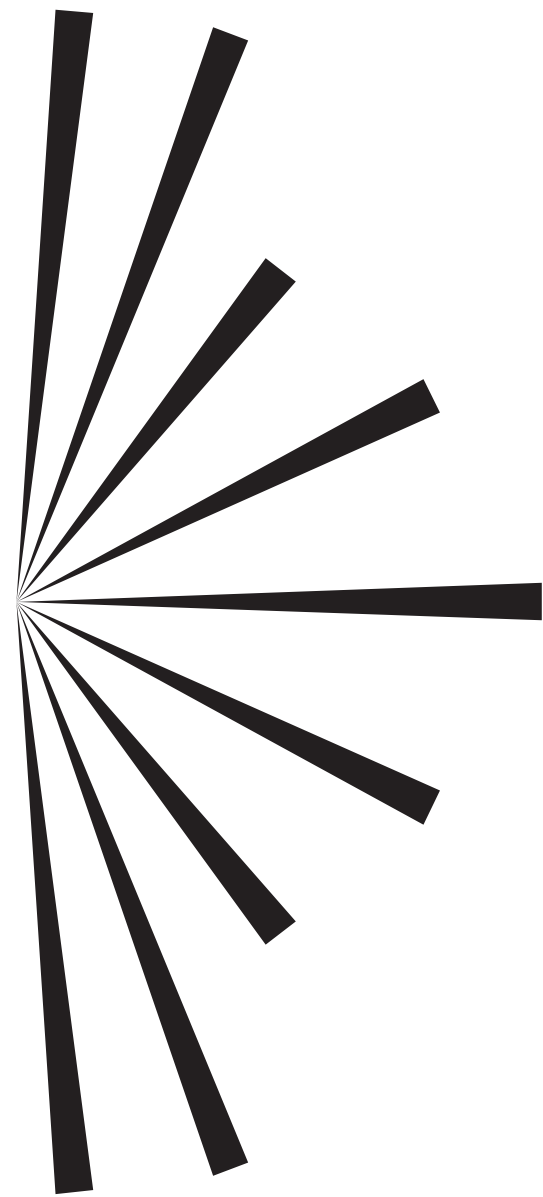
8. The role of anarchists is to build the capacity of oppressed peoples as a whole to struggle for our collective emancipation. It is only when the collective and conscious social force of the mass of oppressed people exceeds the power of capitalism and the state, that a revolution with truly libertarian socialist potential be possible.

9. We believe that revolutionary unionism, or syndicalism, is an essential strategy to build the collective power of the working class. We seek to build rank and file organisations that unite workers across existing unions, and advocate for directly democratic structures and militant strategy.

10. We unite as a specific anarchist organisation on the basis of theoretical unity, tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism. By theoretical unity we mean developing and organising around a shared understanding of anarchism, capitalism and the context in which we operate. By tactical unity we mean developing and collectively implementing a common strategy for achieving our goals. By collective responsibility we mean agreeing to act collectively – rather than individually in the pursuit of our common strategy. By federalism we mean organising on a directly democratic "grass roots up" basis, rejecting any "top down" command structure.

FOOTNOTES

1. Michael Schmidt & Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame: The revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism*, p. 70.



ANARCHISTS ARE “AGAINST SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HIERARCHY AS WELL AS INEQUALITY—AND SPECIFICALLY, CAPITALISM, LANDLORDISM, AND THE STATE—AND IN FAVOR OF AN INTERNATIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION FROM BELOW BY A SELF-ORGANISED WORKING CLASS AND PEASANTRY IN ORDER TO CREATE A SELF-MANAGED, SOCIALIST, AND STATELESS SOCIAL ORDER. IN THIS NEW ORDER, INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM WOULD BE HARMONISED WITH COMMUNAL OBLIGATIONS THROUGH COOPERATION, DEMOCRATIC DECISION MAKING, AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY.”

**— MICHAEL SCHMIDT AND LUCIEN VAN DER WALT,
BLACK FLAME (2009).**